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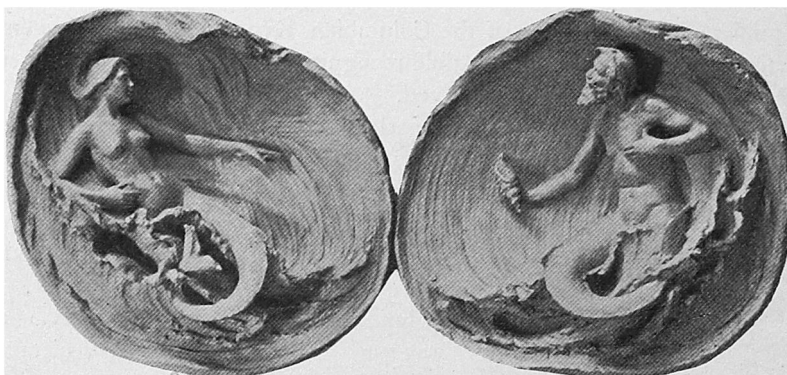
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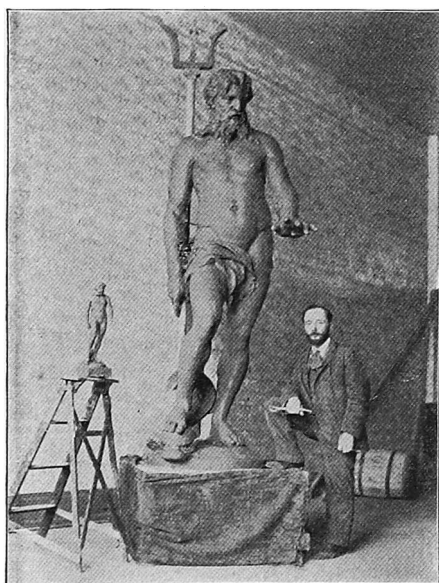
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THE ROMANCE OF THE SEA.

EMIL H. WUERTZ—AN APPRECIATION.



NEPTUNE—OMAHA EXPOSITION.

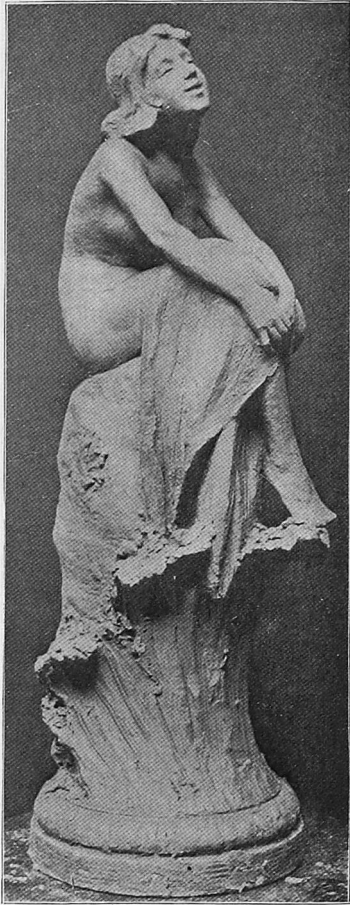
UPON the wall before me there hang two companion sculptures, instinct with the life of the ocean. The hand that modeled them wrote the title beneath them — "The Romance of the Sea." Strange that the artist whose mind turned so often to the mighty deep with its mystery and poetry should lose his own life beneath its moaning waves. When La Bourgogne sank off Sable Island, that sad morning in July, among her passengers was Emil H. Wurtz, the sculptor. He had begun his voyage in high hope, returning to Paris — Paris the beloved, the artistic, the haven into which drift the artists whose "ships have not come in."

Here he believed he could get a firmer footing in his profession. For Chicago had not treated the sculptor with kindness. Perhaps the rich men who failed to see the merit in his works were busy with greater projects, perhaps in the turmoil of building a commercial metropolis they overlooked the modest sculptor who came unheralded into the life of Chicago while its citizens were pouring

their millions into the coffers of the Columbian Exposition. At all events, the artist never received that tangible recognition which his ability, his sincerity, his preparation, really deserved.

I first met Mr. Wuertz in the early days of the construction of the Columbian Exposition. In the Forestry building, miles away, as it then

seemed, across a Sahara of sand and an Everglades of marsh, Karl Bitter and an army of modelers wrought the titanic groups which later adorned, chiefly, the Administration building. Mr. Wuertz was one of Bitter's trusted assistants, toiling for fourteen months upon these striking figures. Later he assisted in the modeling of the black sphinx which lashed its great cat-like tail upon its rocky pedestal on the Wooded Island. He had received a good preparation for the work he was performing. Born in the picturesque Rhine country (at St. Alban, Rheinfaiz, on September 4, 1856), he had from his earliest days looked upon the beauties of nature in his native Germany. Coming to New York when a lad of fourteen, his first work, and that which must have turned his youthful mind toward the higher art to which he afterward gave his life, was that of wood carving. He stepped up a little nearer to the employment he loved when he began to make models for bronze work and designs for photo-lithography. But the beckoning ideals which had been dimly seen in the dust of the wood carving led him to attend the evening classes of the Cooper Union. We can imagine the boy dreaming over his chisel and his modeling tools, and picturing to himself a studio in which he should build up



• A SEA NYMPH.

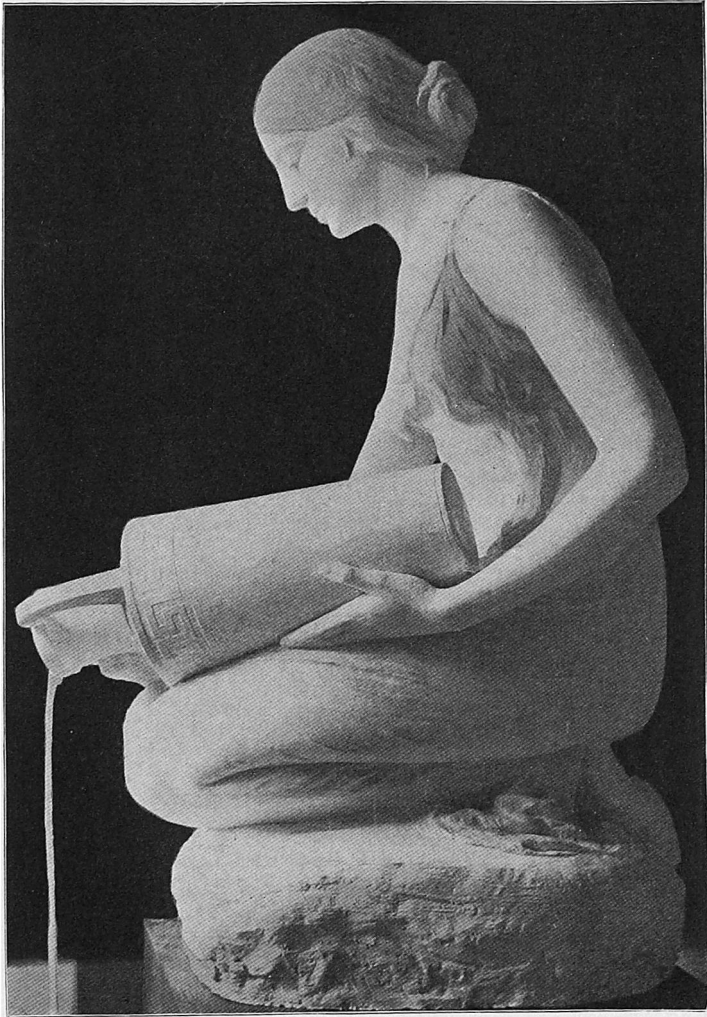
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the obedient clay into heroic figure. And, as he toiled on in what had become a distasteful task, he saved his modest earnings, until, at length, he awoke to find his dream coming true—he was on his way to Paris. Here in the École des Beaux Arts, which has welcomed such an army of Ameri-



EMIL H. WUERZ, SCULPTOR.

cans, he studied and worked with the enthusiasm and the zeal and the industry which characterizes the poor and the unknown art student.



A FOUNTAIN, BY EMIL H. WUERTZ.

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The peasant boy, Millet, leaving the village of Gréville and beginning his new career at Cherbourg, could not have felt more elated or more determined to succeed than the young German-American, not twenty-six

years of age. Hope carried him up to his attic apartments and stood beside him as he took his place among the students in the classic halls of the great French school and before the model with his noisy fellows in the



A SALVATION ARMY GIRL, BY EMIL H. WUERTZ.

From copyrighted photograph.

ateliers of the Julian Academy. It was while in Paris that he enjoyed the student companionship of several young men who have since made names for themselves: F. W. Ruckstuhl and Herbert Adams, and MacMonnies, the creator of those joyous figures which have been alike the delight of

artists and the target of the uninitiated Philistines. There, too, was Mac-Neil, whose Indian figures are making him famous, and who later became, like Wuertz, a member of the Chicago group of artists. Not only did he have these opportunities open to other bright boys, but he had the privilege of entering the private studio of that justly abused genius, Auguste Rodin. Let this suffice for a description of the period of preparation.

* * *

Can one picture a more forlorn and seemingly hopeless task than that set before the young artist as he comes to a great city? His hope and ambition may be boundless, but even if he have multitudes of friends his courage is apt to ooze out. How shall he with his feeble strokes propel his little artistic boat against the currents of prejudice, thoughtlessness, lack of appreciation, commercialism and jealousy? How shall he prevent his craft from going to pieces on the ugly but plainly discovered rock put down on the chart as studio rent, and the bread and butter shoals? Young Wuertz had finished his labors upon the Columbian Exposition sculpture. His hands had assisted in modeling the statuary which brought laurels to another sculptor's brow, and then—Chicago. Can anything be more chilling than the raw winds of Chicago's "art atmosphere"? To be sure, there is a little sunshine which warms the air now and then; a few sunbeams strike some deserving artist, but no Chicago painter or sculptor has ever been known to be sunstruck by the warmth of the city's sun of appreciation. Few rays ever crept into the studio where our sculptor posed his models.

Mr. Wuertz brought to his work high ideals. He was unwilling to lend his art to the development of low thoughts. His ambition was to create something which would command admiration, not because it was bizarre, or of the *fin de siècle* or even realistic, but because based on what appeared to him to be right principles of art and true conceptions of beauty. Once some one suggested to him that if he would model a miniature bacchante astride a huge grape vine it might be adapted to ornament a bottleholder for use in restaurants. He tried it. But it never suited him, and he worked over it, even hired models in order to get the figure, which was only a few inches in height, as nearly correct as may be, and at length the clay of the drunken bacchante became a charming water nymph—a bright, innocent, laughing little thing, one whose pure lips, used to crystal springs, never tasted the pollution of wine. On another occasion he had modeled a Salvation Army lassie, but not being satisfied with the bust, even after he had spent much time upon it, he tore off the flaring bonnet, brought back his model and with deft fingers turned the modern enthusiast's head into that of a classic Cleopatra-like woman, and called it "Pride." He could

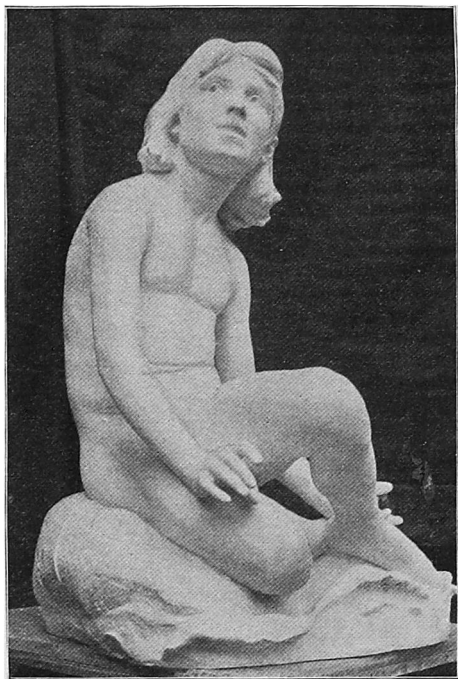


HEBE AT THE WELL

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not be satisfied with the ordinary sort of work, it must needs be ideally beautiful as he apprehended beauty.

The first work of any note that he finished was the "Murmur of the Sea," which he exhibited in the Paris Salon of 1889, and later in the Columbian Exposition where it received a medal. It was afterward shown in the Chicago Art Institute. Here may be seen the figure of a little fisher



THE MURMUR OF THE SEA,
BY EMIL, H. WUERTZ.

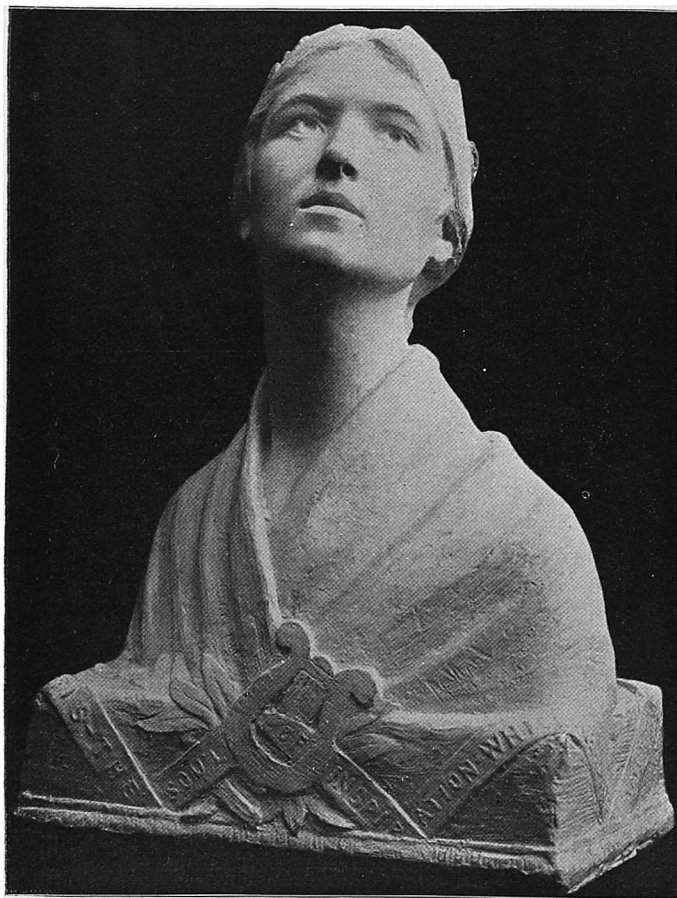
child, of pure mind and youthful grace. It has a charm which wins the observer at once, be he artist or layman — the one by its composition and beauty, the other by the charm of innocent life.

Not long before he left Chicago to perform his last artistic work, the modeling of the huge Neptune which now commands a place of honor before the Government building at the Omaha Exposition, he began his work upon a figure of heroic size intended for a fountain. This took the form of a young woman kneeling, with eyes intent upon a Grecian vase whence the water is gushing. Into this monument he put all his energy and strength and thought. He worked upon it during the daylight and far into

the night. He carefully studied the clinging drapery again and again. He toiled and dreamed over it until his resources failed and he surrendered his studio.

* * *

Tossed upon the billows of the relentless sea, the foam washes back and



INSPIRATION, BY EMIL H. WUERTZ.

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forth over a floating body; sailors remove the winding seaweed from the white face and discover that the body is that of a woman. The body is clad in a night robe and over it a man's gray overcoat. In the pocket of the coat is a letter addressed to Emil H. Wuertz. On that awful morn-

ing, when the alarm rang through the cabin of La Bourgogne, passengers ran forth just as they came from their staterooms. On the wet deck, Wuertz saw a woman's shivering form and wrapped his coat around her that she might be protected. The body found floating off Sable Island was mute but noble testimony to the young artist's heroism. He who in the vigor of his life had showed his admiration for beauty in woman in carefully modeled figure, had paid his last tribute to womankind. "We who are about to die salute thee."

This was the passing of the life of Emil H. Wuertz. His was a cheerful struggle against too great odds. He came nigh unto starvation, yet he would not descend to artistic trickery. He would not "fake" even if he had not enough to eat. He would hire his models, although patrons came not. He would not turn his art into dollars at the expense of his ideals. His figure for the Trans-Mississippi Exposition must be faithfully modeled even if he received a price so small as to make one blush for his neighbors. It is now too late to lighten his burden or to encourage him by word or deed. It is not too late to say these few words of appreciation. It is not too late to search Chicago studios in order to learn if there may be other artists who are worthy and who are struggling.

JAMES SPENCER DICKERSON.



HEAD OF A YOUNG WOMAN,
BY JOSEPH DE CAMP.